

John Thoner House  
(Centre Market Square Historic District)  
2238 Market Street  
Wheeling  
Ohio County  
West Virginia

HABS No. WV-186

HABS  
WVA  
35-WHEEL  
28-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

ADDITIONAL  
FOLIO 11

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

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29-

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOHN THONER HOUSE

HABS No. WV-186

Location: 2238 Market Street, Wheeling,  
Ohio County, West Virginia.

Present Owner: Charles A. Norton.

Present Occupant: Anne's Corner on the Market.

Present Use: Handcrafts Shop.

Significance: John A. Thoner, an immigrant from Germany, built this combination residence and store about 1877. It is a narrow two-and-a-half story brick structure with a steeply pitched roof. Two cornice lines accentuate the south facade and visually emphasize the separation between the residential and commercial functions of the building.

### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1877. The Ohio County, City and County Land Book stated in 1877 that parts of Lots 129 and 130 of Eoff and Chapline Additions were unimproved. The following year the Land Book indicated that this property had been improved by a new building valued at \$1820.00.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Thoner House was built on parts of Lots 129 and 130 of Eoff and Chapline Addition of the Center District of Wheeling. The following references to the title of this property are found in the Ohio County, West Virginia Deed Books:  
  
1866 Deed, 7 November, recorded in Deed Book 51, page 45. William H. Moore et al to Adolph Koenig et al (Stoesel, Berger & Patton, partners under the firm name of Koenig-Patton & Co.) \$1550 for all of Lot 129, Eoff and Chapline Addition.  
  
1876 Deed, 30 September, recorded in Deed Book 66, page 5. Adolph Koenig et al to John Thoner \$1100 for part of Lot 129 (22'1") (North one third) in Eoff and Chapline Addition.

1880 Deed, 2 December, recorded in Deed Book 71, page 531. Elizabeth Wilke to John Thoner \$175.00 for South 3' of Lot 130 in Eoff and Chapline Addition.

Deed of Trust (mortgage) recorded in Deed of Trust Book 27, page 223. Francis E. Thoner to W. J. W. Cowden \$1870.00 promissory note payable at the Dollar Savings Bank for North one third of Lot 129 and South 3' of Lot 130.

1894 Will probated 20 March, recorded in Will Book 7, page 563. Francis E. Thoner devised to Mary Elizabeth Thoner and John Sebastian Thoner.

1894 Deed, 14 April, recorded in Deed Book 92, page 184. W. J. W. Cowden, Trustee to Dollar Savings Bank \$1950.00 for part of Lot 129 and part of Lot 130, Eoff and Chapline Addition.

1894 Deed, 1 June, recorded in Deed Book 92, page 297. Dollar Savings Bank to John S. Thoner \$12,000.00 for part of Lot 129 and part of Lot 130, Eoff and Chapline Addition.

1958 Will, probated 30 September, recorded in Will Book 38, page 252. John S. Thoner devised to John J. Thoner and Louis F. Thoner "my estate both real and personal."

1972 Deed, 27 November, recorded in Deed Book 539, page 49. John J. Thoner and Louis F. Thoner to Friends of Wheeling, Inc. \$8,250.00. Parts of Lots 129 and 130. Eoff and Chapline Addition.

1973 Deed, 15 June, recorded in Deed Book 543, page 277. Friends of Wheeling, Inc. to Charles A. Norton, et al \$121,000.00 for north one third of Lot 129 and south 3' of Lot 130.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Not known.

5. Alterations and additions: Mr. John J. Thoner, grandson of John A. Thoner, builder of the building at 2238 Market Street, and son of John Sebastian Thoner, knew a great deal about the three major alterations to the original structure. He said that in 1895 John Sebastian Thoner remodeled the front of the store. As it was originally built, the first floor store front had two doors and two windows. In 1895 the main front door leading to the second floor was left in place, but the shop door, which was centered between two windows was moved to the far right and a single large display window was introduced.

In 1917 John Sebastian moved his family into the shop and remodeled the second floor for their purposes. Mrs. Thoner did not like the original arrangement of kitchen, dining room and pantry on the first floor behind the shop so her husband hired contractor Anton Prudhome

to move these functions up to the second floor. From 1913 to the mid-1920s the store was operated as a plumbing shop, and after that time it was used only for storage. The difference between commercial and residential taxes was such that the Thoners abandoned completely the idea of living and working in the same building.

In 1972 the Friends of Wheeling, Inc. purchased the Thoner House. During their renovation they removed the trap door and stairs which led from the back of the shop to the basement. They also removed a stairway which connected the shop with the former kitchen dining room and pantry at the rear of the building. Finally, they removed the stairway which had connected the old kitchen with the second floor and the basement. In this way they were able to create an independent rental unit from the rear of the house. In this first floor apartment area where the stairway was located is now a modern kitchen unit, and the pantry has been converted into a bathroom.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

John A. Thoner was born in Germany in 1832. Although trained to be a weaver, upon his arrival in the United States in 1854, Thoner was compelled to adopt a variety of callings including gardener, waiter, and beer bottler. In 1868 he opened a small business which in 1878 enabled him to build a "fine brick premises of three stories'."

John J. Thoner, grandson of John A. Thoner, has in his possession a copy of Thoner's account with contractor John Grey as well as the cancelled checks used as payment for the construction of the building. (See field notes) The over-all cost of building the house "by contract" was \$2970.00. In addition there is a careful itemization of costs associated with fitting out the structure for habitation. This list includes 5 pounds of nails, 25¢; work on coal house, \$3.00; one door and frame and putting in partition, \$12.00; 265 feet of flooring for privy, \$9.27.

On June 1, 1881 Thoner ran an advertisement which read "John Thoner takes this occasion of informing his old customers and the public, that he has taken out coffee house license and fitted up a first class saloon at his old stand. No. 2240 Market Street. His bar will be constantly supplied with the best wines and liquors, beer and ale, that the Market can produce." John A. Thoner died in 1886 at the age of 54 of cancer. His son, John S. Thoner, assumed responsibility for the store at his death.

John S. Thoner was a man "nobody knew" and yet his son, John J. Thoner, believes he was the rock of the family who watched for their best interests and lead a quiet and responsible life.\* John S. Thoner remodeled the store front in 1895 and later, in 1917 adapted the second floor in compliance with his wife's wish to live on one floor. He discontinued the store during the late 1920s, as the tax costs involved in maintaing a home and commercial establishment were very high.

\*Mr. John J. Thoner has a picture in his possession of his father, John S., standing in front of the store prior to its 1895 remodeling. Written on the window are the words: "Family Liquor Store".

John J. and Louis Thoner sold the house in 1971 and today it is once again operating as a combined residence and store.

C. Sources of Information:

Newton, J. H., Nichols, C. C., and Sprankle, A. C. History of the Panhandle, Ohio, Brooke, Hancock, and Marshall Counties. Wheeling, West Virginia: J. A. Caldwell, 1872.

Wheeling Daily Intelligencer. June 1, 1881.

Interviews: Mr. John J. Thoner, 1 September, 1976. Mr. Thoner has in his possession three old photographs of the Thoner House. In addition, he has the contractor's account with John A. Thoner and cancelled checks used as payment for the construction of the building.

Prepared by: Candace Reed  
Architectural Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer, 1976

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is a vernacular Italianate structure uniting a first-floor shop with a dwelling unit above.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Seventy feet by twenty-two feet, three-bay front, two-and-a-half stories.
2. Layout, shape: Rectangular with a rectangular porch wing on the rear.
3. Foundations: Cut stone.
4. Wall construction, finish and color: Red brick masonry.
5. Structural system, framing: Wooden timber spanning members.
6. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc: There is a wooden open covered porch at the second floor rear with a small storage room attached. It is not original. In the front there are three stone steps leading up to each entry. There is a second porch on the north side of the building, toward the rear. It is covered and provided access to the back living spaces as well as a rear exit from the store. This porch appears to be original.

7. Chimneys: There are three brick chimneys on the south side.

8. Openings:

- a. Doors and doorways: There are two front exterior entrances. To the left (north) are large paneled double doors opening to a foyer and staircase to the second floor. To the right is the public entrance to the store. The doorway to the left is original. Records indicate the original store entrance was more to the center. Extending over and between the doors is a bracketed cornice with details similar to those of the roof cornice. Over each doorway is a large transom. There are two entrances to the rear living quarters while the door from the store to the porch has been closed off.
- b. Windows and shutters: There is a large display window on the first floor. There were originally two double-hung two-over two light windows on either side of a doorway. See photographs for second-floor front windows. There are other windows on the side and rear. Of particular note are the shuttered first floor windows on the north porch.

9. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The front portion has a steep gable, with the ridge parallel to the front. The rear section has a gable intersecting at 90 degrees to the front.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The roof has a particularly striking cornice line across the front. The cornice is deep with four sets of supporting double brackets, scalloped dentils and a frieze with a rectangular motif.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The first floor has one open commercial space together with a separate foyer and stair forming the front section. The rear section, originally connected directly includes two rooms and a bath (formerly a pantry) plus the side porch. The second floor has a stair landing with a small room over the front lower hall plus three large back to back rooms, extending the full length of the house. The third floor is only a one room loft. The basement extends from the rear at least half the length of the building to a wall. The remainder was inaccessible.
2. Stairways: There is a straight run stairway with an open well, leading to the upper floors along the north wall of the front section. Another interior stair existed in the rear section of the house but was removed at an earlier date. There is no interior stair to the basement.

3. Flooring: The entire first floor of the front section is carpeted. The rear apartment, first floor, has the original wooden plank floor exposed in the front room, linoleum in kitchen. The second floor has new wooden flooring in the three rooms and tile in the kitchen at the rear.
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: The large commercial shop space on the front has four-foot-high vertical beaded tongue and groove wainscoting around three walls. Above that is contemporary wallpaper. The twelve-foot-high ceiling is sheathed in decorative pressed tin. The walls and ceilings of the back apartment and second floor are painted plaster. The third floor loft is covered with plywood siding and has an acoustical tile ceiling. The basement walls are exposed masonry.
  5. Doors and doorways: The doors and door casings throughout most of the house are original.
  6. Special decorative features: The tin ceiling is a strikingly handsome element of the building. There are also three interesting wooden fireplace mantels on the second floor, although these are not original.
  7. Notable hardware: The latches on many of the interior doors are original.
  8. Mechanical equipment: Steam heating.
- D. Site and Surroundings;

The building fronts directly on the Market area and extends back to an alley at the rear. There is a grade change across the site, with grade being about five feet higher in the rear. There is an abutting building to the south and another approximately six feet to the north. There are no outbuildings.

Prepared by: John McRae  
Architectural Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
September, 1976

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, and Kenneth L. Anderson, HABS Principal Architect, in cooperation with the Friends of Wheeling, Inc. The measured drawings were made during the summer of 1976 under the supervision of John McRae (University of Florida) with architectural technicians Mark L. Hall, Foreman, (Pennsylvania State University); Edward C. Freeman, (Arizona State University); Ruthie D. Wiley (Mississippi State University); Alan G. Wilig (City College of New York); and architectural Historian Candace Reed (George Washington University). The photographs were taken in 1977 by HABS Photographer Jack E. Boucher.

**ADDENDUM TO;**

**JOHN THONER HOUSE**

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Department of the Interior

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